

## UB Law Forum

---

Volume 28  
Number 1 *Fall 2013*

Article 8

---

10-1-2013

### A Month of Discovery: Undergraduates Get A Rigorous Preview of Life in Law School

UB Law Forum

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub\\_law\\_forum](https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum)

---

#### Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2013) "A Month of Discovery: Undergraduates Get A Rigorous Preview of Life in Law School," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 28 : No. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: [https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub\\_law\\_forum/vol28/iss1/8](https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol28/iss1/8)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni Publications at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in UB Law Forum by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact [lawscholar@buffalo.edu](mailto:lawscholar@buffalo.edu).

# A month of discovery

*Undergraduates get a rigorous preview of life in law school*



During a recent visit, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo poses with students from the Law School's Discover Law Program.

**F**our weeks. Twenty students. A half-dozen professors and instructors. And a whole lot of learning, growing and discovery.

That about sums up the Law School's second foray into Discover Law, a program designed to make law school more accessible to students of color that gives promising undergraduates a real-world sampling of a lawyer's work and the rigors of legal education.

The students, who came from as far as Atlanta and Wisconsin and lived on campus during the June experience, took four rigorous courses taught by SUNY Buffalo Law professors, visited working courts, learned about the admissions process and shadowed a judge or attorney for a day. They were paid a small stipend to offset income lost during the month.

In the second year of a three-year grant from the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC), the Discover

Law program is a joint venture of the Law School, the Minority Bar Association of Western New York and the LSAC.

"Not everyone who comes is completely sold that law school is right for them," says Lillie Wiley-Upshaw, vice dean for admissions and student life, who administers the Discover Law program. "But many of them walked away with a firmer commitment to the study of law. They found that they were interested in the topics and how the professors presented information to them. We reassured them that this is very doable — it takes hard work, but if you have that drive and commitment, you can do it and there's a place for you in law school."

New this year was a resume writing workshop by specialist April Sanders, who Wiley-Upshaw says "worked with the students from an intrinsic point of view. The resume was a reflection of who you are, your values." Another addition to the program: Jodyann Galvin '99, a partner at the Buffalo law firm Hodgson Russ, matched the students with volunteer mentors from the local legal community.

One highlight, Wiley-Upshaw says, was a visit to Buffalo's federal court building, where students watched a proceeding and talked with U.S. Magistrate Judge Hugh B. Scott '74.

Among the Law School faculty, Professors Charles P. Ewing, Teresa A. Miller and James A. Wooten taught classes to the students; legal writing instructors Johanna Oreskovic '97 and Bernadette Gargano worked closely with them on research and writing skills; and, in a new twist, Ph.D. student David Sackris from UB's Philosophy Department helped the students with logic skills as part of their LSAT preparation.

Tatiana Williams, a social work major at Syracuse University, says she found the relationships she built were an important part of the experience. "I wasn't expecting that at first," Williams

says. "Everyone was competitive and very driven, and they all had goals they were passionate about. Coming together with that kind of group really changes an individual."

A Rochester native, Williams is hoping to earn a joint degree in law and social work. She was just 9 years old when her father was incarcerated, and she has been a mentor to young children who have a parent in prison — experience she hopes to build on in her law career.

The people in the Discover Law program, she says, "showed us that we are capable of accomplishing anything. They made us aware of some of the obstacles that exist, from finances to family situations, but also showed us what we can do to get around them."

"I didn't know what to expect," she says. "But this was an excellent opportunity that I appreciated. They were a really supportive staff, and that made a huge difference."

Her classmate Edward Fultz, a junior at Morehouse College in Atlanta, says the program "reaffirmed my decision that I want to go to Law School. We visited law firms, courtrooms, we did legal work, and I loved the whole thing. It was work, but work that I had fun doing."

A trip to Wende Correctional Facility also left a big impression. "We visited inmates who were serving 25-to-life sentences," Fultz says. "You see it on TV, but being there is a whole different experience. This man who will be there the rest of his life and he's only 19. That had a really big impact on me."

He acknowledged that Discover Law was a lot of work, "but we all knew that coming in," he says. "This was a rigorous program, a learning experience. But I didn't see it as work."

Oh, and those accommodations: much nicer than his undergraduate residence hall. "It was like a hotel," he says.